

MACAULAY'S USE OF AUTHORITIES

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the highest authority, and sometimes as a mere romance. They seem to imagine that the book is all from the same hand, and ought either to be uniformly quoted with respect or uniformly thrown aside with contempt. The truth is that part of the Life is of the very highest authority, and that the rest is the work of an ignorant and silly compiler, and is of no more value than any common Jacobite pamphlet. Those passages which were copied from the Memoirs written by James, and those passages which were carefully revised by his son, are among the most useful materials for history. They contain the testimony of witnesses, who were undoubtedly under a strong bias, and for whose bias large allowance ought to be made, but who had the best opportunities of learning the truth. The interstices between these precious portions of the narrative are sometimes filled with trash. Whoever will take the trouble to examine the references in my notes will see that I have constantly borne in mind the distinction which I have now pointed out. Surely I may cite, as of high authority, an account of the last moments of Charles the Second, which was written by his brother, or an account of the plottings of Penn, of Dartmouth, and of Churchill, which was corrected by the hand of the Pretender, and yet may, with perfect consistency, reject the fables of a nameless scribbler who makes Argyle, with all his cavalry, swirl across the Clyde at a place where the Clyde is more than four miles wide.¹

In another note, he completes this criticism of the Argyle episode. ' The account of the Scotch rebellion in the Life of James the Second is a ridiculous romance, not written by the King himself, nor derived from his papers, but composed by a Jacobite who did not even take the trouble to look at a map of the seat of war/² It is equally untrustworthy, he says, with regard to what happened in Ireland after James himself left it. * The account

iIII, 1207 (x). 'II, 558 (v).